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## WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH CUBA?

BY MAYO W. HAZELTINE.

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WE may take for granted that, whatever may be the terms of peace ultimately accepted by Spain, they will include an evacuation of Cuba and a recognition of the fact that the destinies of the island are to be shaped by the United States. How are we to discharge the duty thus imposed upon us? The question could be easily answered but for a certain resolution, not suggested by the President's message, but adopted by Congress with a view of obtaining unanimous approval of the contemplated intervention. But for the existence of that resolution, there would be, indeed, no problem to be solved. We should deal with Cuba precisely as we have dealt with other foreign territory which, from time to time, we have annexed. Florida was sold to us by Spain in 1821, and, for twenty-four years, remained under a territorial government, but, in 1845, after the expulsion of the warlike Seminole Indians, it was admitted to the Union. California and New Mexico were annexed in 1848; two years later, the former became a State, but the latter is, to this day, a Territory. Exactly similar was our treatment of the vast Louisiana region acquired by purchase from France; out of this many a State and Territory was, successively, carved, in proportion to the growth of population in particular localities.

Even under what we term Territorial government, the inhabitants of these extensive tracts were incomparably better off than they had been under Spain, Mexico or France, as regards the enjoyment of peace, order and civil liberty. When one of these tracts, or a part of one, entered the Union, it acquired, of course, all of the privileges which are possessed by any of the members of our confederation. Higher political privileges no people can possibly acquire—for our federal system combines the

maximum of safeguard against foreign aggression which is compatible with the exercise of self-government in State, county and municipal affairs. The thousands of Cuban exiles who, for years, have been employed in the manufacture of cigars at Key West, at Tampa and in many northern cities, know by experience what these privileges are, and they will testify that, at any time during the Ten Years' War, or during the present insurrection up to four months ago, their oppressed countrymen would have welcomed with enthusiasm the concession of such large political rights as are enjoyed by the citizens of Florida, or of New York, or of New Mexico, provided, of course, the concession were guaranteed by the substitution of American for Spanish sovereignty. They are keenly alive to the magnitude of the change that would be involved in such a substitution of sovereignty, and they could have been trusted to make it fully comprehended by their countrymen.

## I.

The fact remains that we shall acquire Cuba under conditions different from those under which we acquired Florida, or under which Porto Rico will be ceded. The difference is not imposed by Spain; it is entirely self-assumed. When the message of President McKinley that led to the war was presented to Congress, that body adopted an amendment to the responsive resolutions, an amendment declaring that we entered upon the contest with no other motive than to assure complete political independence to Cuba. It is important for us to determine as promptly and precisely as possible what was meant by that declaration, assuming that those who made it had, at the time, any distinct comprehension of its significance. If we consider the spirit, instead of the letter, of the declaration, it is plain enough that we are estopped even from annexing Porto Rico or demanding coaling stations in the Ladrões and the Philippines. The acceptance, however, of this logical deduction would be a *reductio ad absurdum*. There is not one American citizen in a hundred, probably there is not one in a thousand, who believes that, because we entered upon the war with a philanthropic purpose, we are precluded from exacting some compensation for the outlay which the stiff-necked refusal of Spain to treat her colonists with justice has compelled us to make. Moreover, the logic of philanthropy would itself point to a different conclusion. The inhabitants of Porto Rico have little

more reason to be satisfied with Spanish rule than have the Cubans, and the inhabitants of the Philippines have even stronger reasons for detesting it. Having once opened the prospect of freedom to Porto Rico and Luzon, the same motives which impelled us to the liberation of Cuba should prompt us to shield the two former islands from a ghastly disappointment. So much for the absurdity of allowing ourselves to be guided, in the negotiations of terms of peace, by the widest possible application of the self-denying spirit of the somewhat hasty and gratuitous resolution passed by Congress.

Let us look now at the letter of the self-denying ordinance, and inquire to what it binds us. Here let us observe that the American republic is not the only power which, in recent times, has made a similar declaration at the outset of military operations. When France took possession of Tunis, and when England assumed control of Egypt, the act was coupled, in each instance, with the promise that the occupation should cease when the country occupied should be fully pacified, and the conditions requisite for the establishment of a stable native government should be forthcoming. Many years have passed, yet France continues to retain the Tunisian Regency, and England the valley of the Lower Nile: with good reason, also, for it is acknowledged by all unprejudiced observers that the evacuation of either region by its European custodian would be followed by anarchy and devastation. In the interest of the populations concerned, both England and France have proceeded on the assumption that the time for the fulfillment of their optimistic promise has not arrived, nor is yet even in sight; meanwhile, they have proceeded on the principle expressed by Pope:

**"For forms of government let fools contest ;  
What's best administered is best."**

We admit, however, that the lessons derivable from English experience in Egypt and from French experience in Tunis, although instructive, are not mandatory. We must solve the Cuban problem for ourselves, without more than a cursory glance at foreign precedents, but with a steadfast eye to the welfare of the inhabitants of Cuba, whereof, in the eyes of the world, we are the trustees and conservators. What do we mean by the inhabitants of Cuba? Do we mean the few thousand men who have fought under Gomez, Garcia and other commanders, claiming to derive

their commissions from a so-called provisional government? That government, it should be remembered, has never been recognized by President McKinley, even as a belligerent; no reference was made to it in the message which brought about the declaration of war. Not a few people in this country believed a year ago that the insurgents ought to be acknowledged as belligerents; but, in the light of the fuller knowledge obtainable since our invasion of the province of Santiago, the wisdom of withholding such acknowledgement has received a certain amount of confirmation. Have we any reason to believe that the insurgents and their sympathizers constitute a majority, or even a strong minority, of the inhabitants of the island? Where is the proof of such numerical preponderance? No conclusive proof can be forthcoming until a plebiscite shall be taken under conditions which assure a perfectly free expression of opinion. It may be that, if the purity of the ballot box were assured through American control, a large majority of the inhabitants of Cuba would invoke the guarantees against foreign interference and intestine disorder which would be afforded through the acceptance of the status of a State or Territory in our Union. If such should be the outcome of a plebiscite, it is obvious that the very spirit of the declaration made by Congress, no matter how narrowly construed, would forbid our adherence to the letter. We could not impose on the inhabitants of Cuba complete political independence, that is to say political isolation and economical paralysis, together with the grim necessity of coping with dangerous racial problems, against the consent of the majority; for, if the result of such an act upon our part were the eventual experience by Cuba of the fate of Hayti, we should be held responsible in history for a crime against civilization. Having delivered Cuba from the Spanish yoke, we are accountable for her tranquillity and prosperity; should she be ruined through our abandonment, we cannot absolve ourselves hereafter by the plea, "Was I my brother's keeper?"

## II.

It is clear that thorough pacification is the condition precedent to an entirely free expression of opinion and aspiration on the part of a majority of the inhabitants of Cuba. By inhabitants we mean, and ought to mean, all those persons, whether insurgents, autonomists or ex-loyalists, whether born in the island or else-

where, who signify a wish to maintain a domicile in the Pearl of the Antilles. We cannot drive into exile those native Cubans who have supported Blanco's autonomist government; or those resident civilian Spaniards who follow vocations and own property in the cities and large towns, and who are said to number much more than one hundred and fifty thousand. If even the members of the latter category elect to abide in Cuba and to accept the change of régime, we cannot, without repudiating our philanthropic professions, withhold from them the privilege. We have entered Cuba in the name of even-handed justice, and not in that of revenge. If a sweeping expulsion of all Spanish-speaking residents who did not happen to be born in the island is ever to take place, we must leave the merciless proscription to be carried out by the Cubans when, if ever, they are invested with complete political independence. We suggest, however, that the cynical avowal or the circumstantial proof of an intention to execute vindictive reprisals ought to figure among the considerations that may lead Congress to modify its former declaration, or, at least, to hesitate to concede absolute independence, if we would keep ourselves clear from the charge of complicity in an act of gross barbarity, which, to judge by the Haytian precedent, would be the first fatal step toward social convulsion and catastrophe. The white element in Cuba, if it is to remain preponderant, cannot bear any marked depletion, for the mixture of races in the island differs materially from that which prevails among the Spanish-speaking commonwealths on the American mainland. In the latter communities, a large proportion of the inhabitants are descendants of the aborigines or the outcome of sexual relations between these and the Spaniards. In Cuba, on the other hand, there survives no trace of the aboriginal element; the racial struggle is exclusively between the white man and the black, and experience has shown that the black man is, on the whole, somewhat better suited than the white to the climatic conditions. The island, therefore, needs all the white men now sojourning there who are willing to remain as law-abiding citizens under the new order of things, for the fact must not be overlooked that no considerable emigration of white men from the United States or Northern Europe can be looked for unless the island is annexed to our Union, or until an independent Cuban government shall have demonstrated its ability to assure tran-

quillity and prosperity. Nor will there be any inflow of American enterprise or of American capital into Cuba until that island is known to be permanently safeguarded from the fate, we will not say of Hayti, but of the Central American republics.

What do Cubans want which they would be unable to obtain if their island were admitted to our Union as a Territory or as a State? Under the régime of absolute political independence, they would have to devote a large part of their public revenues to self-protection against foreign aggression. We could not be expected to bear the whole brunt of protecting them if we were suffered to take no part in the shaping of their attitude toward foreign nations. It is scarcely credible that any Cubans can be so infatuated as to attach more dignity and honor to the title of citizenship under a weak, insular republic, than to that name of American citizen which recent events have tended to exalt throughout the earth. If every native Cuban, indeed, could look forward to holding a government office and to following therein the same dishonest practices with which he has reproached the Spaniards, we could understand why he should insist upon retaining absolute control of the Cuban custom-houses, the revenue of which, if the island should become a State or Territory in our Union, would be collected by our Federal Government and, with similar revenue elsewhere collected, be employed for the defense of the whole confederation, whereof Cuba would constitute an outlying and important strategical part.

We will not calumniate the Cuban people by imputing to them a hankering after opportunities for speculation. We assume that, in the desire expressed by some of them for absolute political independence, they are swayed by sentimental motives alone. There is, however, in the character of the Cubans a good deal of shrewdness as well as sentiment. If the alternative were once presented to them distinctly, the mass of them would much prefer to be prosperous as American citizens, than to live from hand to mouth under the flag of a Cuban republic. They deceive themselves if they imagine that, for them, prosperity is compatible with political aloofness. They will soon receive an object-lesson from Porto Rico on this subject, which will gather force with every month during which our soldiers remain in the island for pacifying purposes, and which will receive extraordinary emphasis when Cuba is left, unpropped, to solve the problem of self-government. It

must be remembered that the sister island of Porto Rico is to be annexed to the United States; that is the avowed and irreversible intention of our Government. The instant, however, that Porto Rico enters our Union as a Territory, not only will American enterprise and capital pour thither in a fertilizing flood, but all its natural products, its sugar, its coffee, its tobacco, its timber and its tropical fruits, will be admitted to the vast American market free of duty. How can the products of Cuba compete with those of Porto Rico in the markets of the United States, if the former island remains a foreign country? What about reciprocity? we may be asked. It might not be for our interest to grant a reciprocity treaty to independent Cuba, if, thereby, we should run the risk of cutting short or impairing the progress of Porto Rico and Hawaii, which would have become integral parts of the national soil.

There is one way, and one way only, in which the Cubans can acquire, now and forever, perfect freedom of access to American markets for their natural products, and that is by the admission of their island to the Union. There would be no end to the development of Cuba's natural resources under such stimulating conditions. Nature has done more for her than it has done for Java, which is of almost exactly the same size; yet, in the short space of a century, the population of the latter island has increased from two to more than twenty millions. Cuba is standing, in this crisis, at the parting of the ways. If she chooses, a destiny more splendid than Java's may be hers, for she may unite the dignity and freedom of American citizenship with a more than Javanese prosperity. If, on the other hand, the Cubans shall cling to the barren honor of complete political independence, they will find that it means for them commercial backwardness and economic isolation; that American capital, emigration and enterprise will go elsewhere, and that, soon or late, American tariffs will foster the agricultural industries, not of self-centred and self-dependent Cuba, but of our own tropical domains.

### III.

We return to the point from which we started. The Constitution of the United States has undoubtedly confided to Congress the power of making war, and, therefore, by implication, the power of defining the purpose for which a war is undertaken. In



the exercise of that power, Congress declared that we entered upon war with Spain from no motive of self-aggrandizement, but with the single-hearted resolve to give independence to Cuba. We will not quibble and allege that what many, or, perhaps, most of those who voted for the resolution really had at heart was the desire to give Cuba peace and civil liberty; as good a government and as large a measure of local autonomy as we, ourselves, enjoy under our mixed system of Federal and State administration. The question for us to keep in view is not what Congress might have said, or should have said, but what it did say. Congress pledged itself to give the Cubans political independence, and, until Congress itself shall have seen fit to retract or modify the pledge, it must be carried out.

As regards, nevertheless, the time and method of fulfillment, some reasonable precautions must be taken. The island must be thoroughly pacified, and the conflicting elements of its population must be brought into at least transient harmony before they are invited to discharge the high and difficult function of framing a constitution for an independent republic. In the interest of all the constituents which make up the mixed Cuban people, whether insurgents, or native-born autonomists, or resident Spaniards, it will be the duty of our Government, as their trustee before the world, to examine the proposed constitution and see whether, on its face at all events, it is calculated to administer the even-handed justice which we shall have dealt out during the period of pacification to all the inhabitants of Cuba, without distinction of color or descent. If the projected organic law shall be found ostensibly to answer all the requirements of good sense and equity, then, unless the resolution of Congress shall have been, in the meanwhile, modified, we shall be bound to allow the Cubans to institute their new régime, if they, not by that time enlightened by the happy experience of Porto Rico under the Stars and Stripes, shall still insist on the political independence which, for them, will mean economic isolation and relative commercial inactivity.

MAYO W. HAZELTINE.